

## It isn't so bad after all . . .

### *I-17 construction discussed at open forums*

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ANTHEM – So far, the prevailing attitude over the I-17 widening from the Loop 101 to Carefree Highway is one of relief. The traffic disruption has been better than expected, and the project is moving along on schedule.

Arizona Department of Transportation hosted two open houses, Aug. 28 and 29, at Sandra Day O'Connor High School and Boulder Creek High School respectively, to offer information on the freeway widening. Approximately 100 north valley residents dropped in to the BCHS cafeteria that night to see new information about the I-17.

New general purposes lanes will be added to either side of the freeway, starting at the Loop 101, and construction up to Anthem Way is slated to be finished by the end of 2009. Originally, the construction had been pushed off for several more years, but new funding moved up the date.

"The acceleration was money from the legislature," said public involvement officer Tim Tait, one of the ADOT representatives on hand at the BCHS public forum. He noted I-17 widening from Anthem Way to New River was on the agenda, but as part of Phase IV of the Regional Transportation Plan, it is not scheduled to begin until 2021. Likewise, the HOV lanes that are part of the transportation plan but not part of the accelerated construction will not be built until Phase IV begins.

Brock Barnhart, ADOT community relations representative, reported that residents' comments about the construction have been overwhelmingly positive.

"We've gotten a lot of kudos lately. Things are going well," he remarked.

"It's moving along well," commented meeting attendee District 6 Representative Sam Crump. "So far, so good."

As part of the New River/Desert Hills Community Association and a longtime New River resident, Jimmy Fidler has seen plenty of change in the area and gotten involved with community improvements. As part of the community association, he asked ADOT to move up I-17 widening.

"Several of us sent a group to talk to ADOT," he said. With the help of extra funding, positive results were forthcoming, and the construction began.

**Interstate 17 Improvements**

- 1 I-17/Deer Valley Road–Phase I**
  - Reconstruct existing traffic interchange
- 2 I-17/Loop 101 to SR 74 (Carefree Hwy)–Phase I**
  - Add a general purpose lane and a high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane
- 3 I-17/Jomax Road–Phase I**
  - Construct new interchange
  - Convert frontage roads to one-way
- 4 I-17/Dixieita Drive–Phase I\***
  - Construct new interchange
  - Convert frontage roads to one-way
- 5 I-17/Lone Mountain Road–Phase I**
  - Construct new interchange (future connection to Loop 303)
- 6 I-17/Dove Valley Road–Phase I\***
  - Construct new interchange
- 7 I-17/SR 74 (Carefree Hwy)–Phase I**
  - Reconstruct existing traffic interchange
- 8 I-17/SR 74 (Carefree Hwy) to Anthem Way**
  - Add a new general purpose lane–Phase I
  - Add a new high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane–Phase IV
- 9 Anthem Way to New River Road–Phase IV**
  - Add a new general purpose lane

"It's been a long time coming," agreed Pete and Priscilla Lee of the I-17 construction. They have lived in Desert Hills for 20 years. In that time, they've witnessed the north valley housing boom and all the development that has come with it.

"We've seen a lot of changes," said Pete. "Some good and some bad."

With the traffic on the I-17 heavy even before construction began, the Lees try to limit their driving.

"We try to plan it so we can do as many things as possible in one trip," Priscilla noted.

While the construction, on the whole, is going smoothly, ADOT is reminding drivers to be careful in the construction area, to obey the posted work zone speed limits, and to allow themselves extra time on the road to compensate for any construction-caused delays.

For more information and updates on ADOT construction projects, visit [www.azdot.gov](http://www.azdot.gov) and click on the Valley Freeways link.